

Judges & Ruth

God's *Faithfulness* Remains

women's | BIBLE STUDY

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LESSON *Eleven*

Samson and the Philistines

Next, the drama heightens. After Samson's wife was given to another, he responded in a fit of rage. Despite Samson's selfish motives, in an act of grace God empowered him to overtake the Philistines. Samson then fell for a Philistine woman, Delilah, who manipulated him into revealing the secret of his supernatural strength. It was there that Samson ultimately met his end.

REVENGE

Verse 7 reveals that Samson was angry and sought revenge. For God's instruction on these topics, see Leviticus 19:18; Psalm 94:1-2; Matthew 5:38-39; Luke 6:27-28; 1 Peter 3:9; and Hebrews 10:30.

BURNING THE FIELDS

Samson's act of burning the Philistinian fields was likely detrimental to their economy.

Read Judges 15-16 before answering the following questions.

1. Think back over chapters 13-14. What aspects of Samson's character might hinder his obedience to his call from God? (Include Scripture references.)

Read Judges 15.

2. Samson's relationship with the Philistines hit new heights of tension. Use the prompts below to briefly unpack this passage:

The problem (verses 1-2):

Samson's solution (verses 3-5):

The Philistines' retaliation (verse 6):

Samson's response (verses 7-8):

Samson's encounter with Judah (verses 9-13):

3. Compare the role of the tribe Judah in Judges 1:1-4 to Judges 15:9-12. How were they different?

What have you started to tolerate or embrace that God is against?
Where in your life do you feel continual pressure to conform to the culture of our day?

- Reflecting on the miracles in verses 14-20, which aspects of God's character are revealed despite Samson's poor behavior?
- God is the God of miracles. In your past, where have you seen God do the seemingly impossible? Where do you need to see God do something miraculous today?

Read Judges 16:1-22.

- List the three things that happen in the short story of the city gate (verses 1-3). Why do you think the author included this story?
- In the chart below, briefly describe the various lies that Samson told Delilah about the source of his strength, as well as the results.

VERSES	SAMSON'S LIE	THE OUTCOME
7-9		
10-11		
13-14		

GRACE

There are parallels in Judges 15:16-19, Exodus 17:1-7, and Numbers 20:2-13. Read these passages to see more of God's undeserved grace on His people.⁶²

GOD IS ABLE

Luke 1:37 says, "For nothing will be impossible with God." While this truth is beautiful, remember, just because God is able does not mean He will act. Even so, we can trust that in His infinite wisdom, in every situation, He is doing what is best.

HEBRON

Hebron was around 40 miles from Gaza, so this was no short distance to carry the heavy city gate.⁶³

SHEKELS

1,100 shekels from the five Philistinian lords would be around 140 lbs. of silver, an amount exceeding 15 million dollars today. It was a large offer that Delilah would not have declined.⁶⁴

Considering the events in the chart on the previous page, why would Samson have stayed in a relationship with Delilah?

JESUS' EXAMPLE

Read Matthew 4:1-11 to learn how Jesus fought the temptation of sin. His example is a great help for believers today.

VERSE 22

Verse 22 subtly indicates an upcoming shift in the story.

DAGON

Dagon was the grain deity of the Philistines. For another reference to him, see 1 Samuel 5:1-2. Notice the irony that the Philistines were killed in what was likely the temple of their own god.⁶⁵

ENTERTAINMENT

"Samson 'entertains' his audience by appearing before them as a pathetic, laughable caricature of his former self."⁶⁶

Verse 20 is scary: The Lord had left Samson. However, be encouraged. Believers today have a comforting promise that gives great hope. Jesus is always with you, and nothing can change this. His faithfulness remains. (Matthew 28:20; John 10:28-29; Romans 8:38-39)

8. Though Delilah continued to harm and sabotage him, Samson remained with her. When have you returned to something or someone, even though you knew it was wrong, harmful, or unwise? (See Appendix: Temptation.)

Because of the work of Jesus on the cross, believers can fight sin. As you do, remember these helpful tools:

- The power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:13)
- The understanding of Jesus. (Hebrews 4:15-16)
- The benefit of knowing where you might sin. (1 Peter 5:8)
- The freedom in confession. (James 5:16)
- The help of accountability. (Galatians 6:1-5)
- The truth that you are still loved by God, no matter what. (Romans 8:31-39)

Read Judges 16:23-31.

9. How did Samson's disobedience and eventual downfall influence the way the Philistines viewed God? (verses 23-24)

10. Samson started with great promise, a child devoted to the Lord for all the days of his life. However, his life ended abruptly as a result of his sin. What sins ultimately led to Samson's death?

11. Circle what stands out to you from Samson's prayer in verse 28:

"O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."

How does God respond to Samson?

12. Have you ever felt so far from God, whether in the depth of your sin or in the pain of a trial, that you believed He could not hear your cry? Read Judges 16:28-30 and Psalm 34:17-19. How do these verses encourage you?

REMEMBER

The theme of "remembrance" is scattered throughout the Old Testament. See Genesis 9:15, Exodus 2:24, and Psalm 25:6 for examples. God remembers because of His relationship with His people. Samson is no different.⁶⁷

SHACKLES OF SIN

"Samson illustrates people who have power to conquer others, but who cannot conquer themselves. He set the Philistine fields on fire, but could not control the fires of his own lust. He killed a lion, but would not put to death the passions of the flesh. He could easily break the bonds that men put on him, but the shackles of sin gradually grew stronger on his soul."⁶⁸

BE ENCOURAGED

Though sinful, we are never too far from God's grace. Read Luke 15:11-32 to be encouraged.

GOD'S PURPOSE

Look back to God's purpose for Samson in 13:5. God faithfully fulfilled this purpose for Israel despite Samson's sin.

JESUS AS SAVIOR

Samson's life mirrors that of Jesus in several ways: His predicted birth (Luke 1-2), the miracles He performed, and sacrificial death (Matthew 26-28). Yet Jesus was the Savior Samson could never be.

BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

Where in Samson's story do you see:

<i>Sin</i>	
<i>Slavery</i>	
<i>Supplication</i>	
<i>Salvation</i>	
<i>Silence</i>	

Notes